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Shalom bayis

A woman who was warned by her husband not to seclude herself with another man and disobeyed must undergo a test. This test will determine whether or not she had relations with this other man or not. She must drink the sota waters. One of the ingredients of this water is Hashem's erased name which is placed inside the water. Hashem's name is first erased and then subsequently placed in the water as stated in the pasuk (5, 23).

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes (Tiferes Shimshon pages 42-43) explains that erasing Hashem's name is not a light matter. Erasing Hashem's name is actually a Torah prohibition. The Yalkut Shemoni says that **peace is so important that it even overrides the prohibition of erasing Hashem's name**. Meaning, peace, friendship and unity are so important that we are commanded to erase Hashem's name in order to create potential peace. Many times we realize how important it is to be peaceful, patient, calm and sacrifice for others. However, sometimes when there is a quarrel and a big loss could result, we don't control ourselves. Or when someone insults us we might retaliate. We must be careful to remain calm and not get angry. The Torah is teaching us that we must have a lot of self-sacrifice in order to maintain a tranquil setting to the extent that if need be Hashem's name will be erased.

The Gemara in Shevuos (39) relates that the entire world shook when Hashem said not to swear falsely (Shemos 20). The same problem applies to erasing Hashem's name. Why did the entire world shake? The Gemara in Menachos (29b) quotes the pasuk that says "כי ביה ה' צור עולמים". The letters י and ה are used to describe Hashem. These letters allude to the two worlds that Hashem created. The ה refers to this world and the letter י refers to the next world. Meaning, both this world and the next world were created from and because of Hashem's name. Consequently, Hashem's name is essentially the foundation of the entire world. It is for this reason that if one belittles Hashem's name, erases Hashem's name or utters Hashem's name in vain, the entire world shakes. He is almost destroying the world. This is how much we need to sacrifice in order to foster harmony. **Even if Hashem's name is erased, which is like the destruction of the world, it is still allowed in order to maintain tranquility.**

Sometimes we must disregard our main principles in order to maintain peace. Sometimes we should even spend money in order to maintain peace. (This is under the assumption that it doesn't transgress any halachos.) In this merit, Hashem's divine presence will dwell amongst us.

This coincides with a fundamental Gemara. **The Gemara in mesechas Sota (17a) quotes Rabbi Akiva who says that if a man and a woman are worthy, Hashem's Divine presence will dwell amongst them. If they don't merit, then a fire will consume them.** Rashi explains that if they have harmony, then the letter י from the word איש will combine with the letter ה from the word אשה to spell יה, aka Hashem's name. Hashem's divine presence will then reside between them. If they do not have peace then Hashem will remove Himself from their lives. Consequently, the letter י will be removed from the word איש and the letter ה will be removed from the word אשה. All that will be left will be the words אש and אז. (זכור רבי עקיבא איש ואשה, זכור אש וזכור אש אוכלתן, לא זכור אש אוכלתן. רש"י כתב, שהרי חלק את שמו ושיכנו ביניהן יו"ד באיש וה"י באשה. לא זכור אש אוכלתן. שהקב"ה מסלק שמו מביניהן ונמצאו אש ואש.)

It is interesting to point out who said this statement, Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva typically doesn't say aggadah statements as is evident from the Gemara in Sanhedrin (67b) ("ותעל הצפרדע ותכס את ארץ מצרים", אמר רבי אלעזר צפרדע אחת היתה, השריצה ומלאה כל ארץ מצרים. כתנאי, רבי עקיבא אומר צפרדע אחת היתה, ומלאה כל ארץ מצרים. אמר לו רבי אלעזר בן עזריה עקיבא, מה לך אצל הגדה? כלה מדברותיך ולך אצל נגעים ואהלות, צפרדע מנע מדברייך, ופנה להלכות נגעים.) In fact, Rashi explains that Rabbi Akiva is more of a halacha expert as opposed to an aggadita expert. (ואהלות שהן חמורים ובהם אתה מחווד, ולא בהגדה.) However, because of the importance of this topic, he deviated from his norm. Perhaps we could glean a better understanding and significance of Rabbi Akiva saying this statement from another Gemara. The Gemara in Shabbos (25b) relates a machlokes Tanaem about who is considered wealthy. (תנו רבנן איזה עשיר? כל שיש לו נחת רוח בעשרו דברי.) רבי מאיר. רבי טרפון אומר כל שיש לו מאה כרמים ומאה שדות ומאה עבדים שעובדין בהן. רבי עקיבא אומר כל שיש לו אשה (נאה במעשים. רבי יוסי אומר כל שיש לו בית הכסא סמוך לשולחנו.) Rabbi Akiva is of the opinion that one who has a good wife with good deeds is considered wealthy. The Marsha explains that the answer of each Rabbi depended upon the area that highlighted his life. Meaning, the opinion of each Rabbi was formulated based on his personal experience. Rabbi Akiva's wife was Rachel, the daughter of the wealthy Kalva savua, is a role model for all Jewish women. Rachel exemplified a very high form of mesiras nefesh (self-sacrifice) for her husband's learning. In fact the Gemara in Kesubos (62b-63a) relates that she encouraged Rabbi Akiva to leave her for TWENTY FOUR years straight in order to be completely engrossed in Torah and become a great talmid chacham, which he did. Regardless, they raised great children and had excellent shalom bayis. Thus, it is fitting for Rabbi Akiva to make such a statement regarding shalom bayis. Rabbi Akiva in fact practiced what he preached.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein (Aleinu L'shabayach page 101) makes an interesting point. The letters י and ה need to halachically be adjacent to one another. If these two letters are separated then they aren't combined together and thus aren't considered Hashem's name. This is why it is prohibited to separate these two letters in any way. Separating them would constitute Hashem's name being erased. A couple that has tranquility is considered like one as the pasuk states "והיו לבשר אחד". When they have unity it is considered as if the letters י and ה from the words איש ואשה are juxtaposed next to each other, even though there are actually several letters in between those two letters. Conversely, if they don't have proper peace then these letters are considered to be separate from one another. It will be considered as if these letters are erased. The Chamude Yitzchak explains that once they don't have shalom bayis it is considered as if Hashem's name is already erased. Thus, there is an obligation to physically erase Hashem's name as it is already considered erased.

The Medrash Raba (in several places. Vayikra Raba (9, 9), Bamidbar raba (15), Devarim Raba (6, 15) and the Yerushalmi in Sota (1, 4) and Rashi (Avos (1, 12) quotes this story in short as well.) relates an important story. One woman enjoyed attending Rabbi Meir's shiur. By the time she returned home the candle that had been lit extinguished because she was away for such a long time. Her husband angrily asked 'where have you been?' She responded at the shiur. Her husband then said I don't want you to enter into this house until you spit on Rabbi Meir's face. She left the house to go daven. Eliyahu Hanavi then appeared to Rabbi Meir and informed him that it was because of him that she isn't allowed into her house. Eliyahu then informed Rabbi Meir where she went to daven. Rabbi Meir then approached her and pretended that he was sick. He then asked her to spit into his eye seven times because her spit had medicinal powers. She then spat in his face seven times. Rabbi Meir then told her to tell her husband that he said to spit

in my eyes once and you just did so seven times. Rabbi Meir's talmidim then asked him isn't this a disgrace to the Torah. We could have lashed this husband until he would have agreed to take back his wife (this is similar to what they do to a husband who refuses to give his wife a get). Rabbi responded that my respect shouldn't be greater than Hashem's respect. Meaning, if Hashem allows His name to get erased, then I certainly shouldn't need to care about my own respect.

Seemingly Rabbi Meir's student's claim was a legitimate claim. Why did Rabbi Meir feel the need to disgrace himself? He could have chosen another option which wouldn't have required him to disgrace himself. Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian (Lev Eliyahu) answers (one answer was already mentioned above; when a couple doesn't have shalom bayis it is considered as if Hashem's name is already erased.) that in order to create peace between spouses it is worthwhile to erase Hashem's name. **It is preferable to erase Hashem's name in order not to prevent any possibility of shalom bayis not being made. Erasing Hashem's name will teach this couple how important shalom bayis is. Thus, any potential for peace will be reached.** Rabbi Meir deduced from this that he shouldn't worry about him personally being disgraced, even though there is another way to solve this problem: lashing this wicked husband. It is better that he should be disgraced in order to create peace between the couple. **In order to create peace one should forgo his own respect and disregard his own honor.**

Even if this woman passes the test, nevertheless she is still a sota, and still secluded herself with another man despite her husband's warning. True, she didn't have the prohibited relations, but she still violated her husband's warning and secluded herself with another man. She obviously isn't the most God fearing person. Her yeitzer hara got her. Hashem still wants His name to get erased even in this scenario in order to create peace.

The Ohel Moshe (page 195) elaborates. Rashi (Shemos 28, 8) explains that the Jewish women had mirrors they would use to adorn themselves and to entice their husbands. These mirrors were subsequently used as donations for the Mishkan. Actually, Moshe didn't want to use these mirrors for the Mishkan because they were used to entice their husbands. Hashem disagreed and said 'these are dearer to me than all other donations.' It is only because of these mirrors that the women were able to have children. In fact, the kiyor (sink) in the Beis Hamikdash which the Kohanim use to wash their hands and where the water that is given to the sota comes from was made from these mirrors. Thus, since the kiyor is used to create peace between spouses, it is most fitting that it is made from those mirrors which were used for shalom bayis purposes.

The Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer (perek 16) states that a groom is similar to a king (חתן דומה למלך). The Otzros HaTorah (marriage pages 317-320) relates eighteen ways how grooms are similar to kings. Additionally, brides are similar to queens. This concept is derived from the Gemara in Kesubos (17a). The Gemara relates that king Agrefus allowed a bride to pass in front of him when they met at a split in the road. **A married couple must build their house in a kingly manner. Kings are involved only with the most important and major issues that arise. This is precisely how brides and grooms should act. They should focus on the most significant matters. When one focuses on crucial matters they don't have time to quarrel with one another. When they do this then they will surely live happy lives.**
If a husband wants to be treated like a king then he should treat her like a queen.
Similarly, if a wife wants to be treated like a queen then she should treat her husband like a

king. The pasuk in Mishlay (27, 19) says “As water reflects a face back to a face, so one’s heart is reflected back to him by another.” (“כמים הפנים לפנים כן לב האדם לאדם.”)

We shouldn’t have high expectations. If we have high expectations then we won’t appreciate what is done for us. The Gemara in Yevamos (63a) relates several interesting stories regarding shalom bayis. Rav’s wife would bother him. Whatever he asked her to make, she would make the opposite. Rabbi Cheya’s wife would also bother him. Even so, when he would find an item that his wife would like he would bring it to her. **Rav asked Rabbi Cheya ‘why are you doing this after the fact that your wife constantly bothers you?’ Rabbi Cheya answered ‘it is enough that she raises our children and saves me from sinning.’** (רב הוה קא מצערא ליה) דביתהו, כי אמר לה עבידי לי טלופחי - עבדא ליה חימצי, חימצי - עבדא ליה טלופחי (מין קטניות). כי גדל חייא בריה, אפיך לה. אמר ליה: איעליא לך אמך! אמר ליה: אנא הוא דקא אפיכנא לה. אמר ליה, היינו דקא אמרי אינשי: דנפיק מינך טעמא מלפך, את לא תעביד הכי, שנאמר: למדו לשונם דבר שקר העוה וגו'. רבי חייא הוה קא מצערא ליה דביתהו, כי הוה משכח מידי, צייר ליה (בסודריה ומייתי ניהלה. אמר ליה רב: והא קא מצערא ליה למר! א"ל: דיינו שמגדלות בנינו, ומצילות אותנו מן החטא.) **This is really all we should expect. This will help keep our expectations low. We will then be able to appreciate what is being done for us.**

We must respectfully talk to our loved ones. Rav Shach once heard that a couple was separating over foolish reasons. **Rav Shach** called the husband to him and said you must talk to your wife the same way you talk to me. (Tiferes Avos page 16)

On Shabbos and Yuntif we are obligated to cover the challah with a challah cover. One of the reasons for this, explains the Mishna Berurah (271, 41 quoting the Tor) is in order that the bread doesn’t see its humiliation. (שלא יראה הפת בשתו) When one wants to have bread and wine, he must halachically recite the beracha on the bread first because the pasuk mentions wheat before wine (Devarim 8, 8). At the Shabbos table, though, because of the significance of making Kiddush on wine, the beracha of wine takes precedence. The challah, therefore, is covered so that it doesn’t observe its shame of being bypassed for the moment. The question arises: does the bread have sensitivities or feelings? Of course not! Yet Chazal instructed us to behave in a manner that conveys consideration and sensitivity to the challahs. How much more so is it important for us to show sensitivity to human beings who do have feelings! Thus, **a husband who criticizes his wife in any way such as her cooking is missing the message of the challah.** (In the footsteps of the Maggid page 168-169.) **The message of challah is not to embarrass others. If you embarrass others then you are missing the message of challah.** This also coincides with what we discussed in parshas Va’eira (2016); why Moshe wasn’t able to hit the ground.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach lost his wife (Rebbetzin Chaya Rivka) that he was married to for fifty four years. They raised children in an apartment that was only a room and a half! In front of thousands of people who gathered to pay their last respects to her, Rabbi Auerbach eulogized her at her funeral, on 12 Teves 5744 (1983). **Rabbi Auerbach** concluded his eulogy by saying ‘although it is customary to ask for forgiveness from a deceased at his funeral, I will not do so now. This is because we lived our years together in total peace, without either of us ever having in the least hurt one another. Throughout our entire marriage we never offended or hurt each other. We conducted our lives according to the Shulchan Aruch. I have nothing for which to ask my wife forgiveness.’

How is it possible to merit such a level to never upset one's wife? This can be answered based on another story about Rabbi Auerbach. Once, a young man accompanied Rabbi Auerbach to his home in the Shaarei Chessed neighborhood of Jerusalem on a very windy day. The wind had made him look slovenly. Before he entered his home, he smoothed and tidied his beard and clothes. The young man asked him if he was expecting guests at his home, in whose honor he was tidying himself. Rabbi Auerbach replied that he wasn't expecting any guests. Rather when he enters his home to meet his wife, he considers it equivalent to receiving the Divine Presence. The Gemara in mesechas Sota (17a) relates that if a man and a woman are worthy, Hashem's Divine presence is amongst them. (דריש רבי עקיבא איש ואשה, זכו שכינה ביניהן, לא זכו אש אוכלתן. רש"י כתב, שהרי חלק את שמו ושיכנו ביניהן יו"ד באיש וה"י באשה.) He therefore groomed himself, straightened his hat and fixed his suit in her honor. He said that **we have a good marriage; there are no arguments between us. Thus, the Shechina is in our home. I am preparing myself to be in the presence of the Shechina. He added 'a wife doesn't need to see her husband untidy and unkempt. When a man enters his home, he should be neat and orderly with an affable expression on his face.'** After fifty four years of marriage, he was still considerate to show a happy and illuminating smile to his wife. This was a great person. **A husband who consistently enters his house with the attitude that he is greeting the Shechina when he greets his wife will certainly and unsurprisingly not need to ask for forgiveness from his wife even after fifty four years of marriage.**

The virtue of loving and chasing after peace is very crucial. What many unfortunately commonly forget is that peace is pertinent and very important at home between husband and wife, and among siblings. It is obvious that Rabbi Auerbach and his wife didn't forget this. Another important lesson that we could derive from the way Rabbi Auerbach acted is as follows: a wife should never see her husband with a frowning or angry face. Negative emotions change a person's appearance for the worse.

An important postscript to this eulogy must be added. A certain young man who was very close to Rabbi Auerbach got married. He had been privileged to receive personal guidance from Rabbi Auerbach about how to build a Jewish home. Several months after the wedding, he met Rabbi Auerbach, who asked him how things were going. The young man answered 'everything is going well, Baruch Hashem. Our home is peaceful and calm, and we do not have any disagreements.' With a puzzled look on his face Rabbi Auerbach asked the young man, 'tell me, did you divorce your wife? Or did she die chas v'shalom?' The young man was aghast. 'It is not possible to live with a woman without having disagreements. If everything is peaceful and calm as you said it is as though you are not living together.' The young man responded 'but the Rosh Yeshiva himself said at the Rebbetzin's funeral that he had no reason to ask for forgiveness from his wife.' Rabbi Auerbach then explained what he meant. **The natures of man and women are very different, and Hashem created the world in such a way that what one person wants, the other person does not necessarily want. It is inevitable, therefore, that there should be disagreements in a home. But that does not mean the couple has to fight. If there is a disagreement, it does not have to become bitter. It should be handled calmly and peacefully. Two people can contend, and they each can, and should, state their opinion unabashedly. That is no contradiction to a husband standing over his wife's grave and saying outright that he has nothing to ask forgiveness for, because any disagreements that arose were handled peacefully, not bitterly, with each person yielding to the other.'**

(The River the kettle and the bird page 143. The Garden of peace pages 275-276. Along the maggid's journey pages 103-104. Tiferes Avos pages 30-31. Great Jewish Speeches pages 294-296. See Aleinu L'shabayach chalek gimal page 256.)

The Mishna in Avos (1, 12) quotes Hillel who says that we should be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace etc. (הלל אומר הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום). Rashi relates how Aaron would make peace. When he would see two individuals who were upset with one another, he would attempt to make peace. He would go to each one individually and tell him that his friend wanted to make peace. Subsequently peace would follow.

It could very well be that we have the ability to make peace between two of our friends who aren't getting along with one another or between our family members. If we have the ability to do so, we should definitely act upon it. This is a very big mitzvah. We should tell the other what they want to hear (Kesubos 17a) and do what others want to be done. It will probably be quicker to do whatever task is expected than to argue over. It will certainly pay off in the long run; it will even pay off in the short run.